

The Disappointed Heirs.

GENERAL SIDNEY was in many respects a singular old man; but for all this he was noble, true-hearted and generous. Though only fifty-five, he has survived his wife and three children and was alone in the world, unless two rival nephews, who were contending for the hundred thousand the General had to leave, when he died, might be regarded as the companions of his pilgrimage. They certainly were very devoted to him, and everything which friends could do for his comfort—except love and esteem him.

The existence of a hundred thousand dollars is a sad damper upon any feeling of disinterestedness which pious heirs desire to exhibit. John Sidney and Joseph Boyles no doubt tried to be disinterested in their devotion to their rich uncle, and if he had been a poor man they might have found it quite easy to be so. They were cousins, and both members of the same church. If they tried to love each other, in obedience to the divine command, they did not succeed very well, for even a superficial observer might have seen through the shallow protestations of affection which were constantly interchanged between them.

General Sidney was not a very close observer, and probably knew less of the real character of his nephews than any man in their circle of acquaintance. But, superficial as was his observation, he succeeded in finding out John Sidney. Either the pious heir expectant lacked in shrewdness, or fortune deserted him, for his rich uncle suddenly turned against him. In vain John tried to conciliate him—the General was as stubborn as a mule, and would not interpret any of his kindly offices as the evidence of genuine esteem.

When the heart of the rich man had banished one of his nephews, the other more perfectly filled it. As John Sidney was hated, so John Boyles was loved. The former persevered in his attempts to win back the lost favor, and the latter as persistently labored to defeat his intentions.

The old gentleman's health began to fail him, and as he was denied the privilege of going abroad, Boyles was untiring in his efforts to make him comfortable and contented at home. Every forenoon he went up to the invalid's room and read the morning papers to him, informing him of the condition of stocks and the market generally, and related all the gossip and scandal afloat in the street. In the evening he visited him again, read the evening papers, told him funny stories and never left him until he had seen him comfortably in bed for the night. Joseph Boyles was a shrewd person, and fully comprehended the nature of his position.

It was surmised that the General had recently made a will, and the favored nephew was satisfied that he had won the victory. His uncle seemed to dote upon him, and he certainly needed no assurance of the esteem in which he was held.

The General grew worse, and Boyles spent nearly all this time with him. Professing the deepest solicitude for his health he urged various remedies upon him, all of which his uncle adopted with implicit faith in their efficiency; but in spite of Boyles' specifics, and even the prescriptions, he continued to fall, and finally dropped off suddenly—so unexpectedly, in fact, that no one knew when the breath left his body.

The work of Joseph Boyles was finished. His uncle was dead, and he had every reason to suppose he should inherit his princely fortune. There was no longer any occasion to dissemble, and after he had put the body in the coffin, on the evening of his death, I was not a little surprised to be informed that the funeral would take place at eleven o'clock on the following day. Boyles said the heat of the weather would not permit us to keep the corpse another day, and though I differed in opinion with him, I made no objections.

Boyles was a stingy man, proverbially so, and the arrangements for the funeral were very simple. Even the coffin was a cheap affair, and only four carriages were provided for the occasion. But General Sidney was dead and could find no fault with the simplicity of his burial ceremonies. He was put in the family tomb, and the friends turned their attention to the important matter of the distribution of his property.

As many had supposed, Boyles was the sole heir. A paltry legacy was all the notice taken of John Sidney, who had expected "something handsome," at least, at the decease of his uncle. When the lawyer had left with the will—it was the day after the funeral—the two cousins were left alone. It was not the nature of John Sidney to rest content with the provisions of the will. He had failed to detach his rival, but he was not prepared to be virtually disinherited.

"You may think it is just," said he, in a surly tone to Boyles. "That is not for me to decide," replied the heir, modestly. "I can only say that I had no hand in making my uncle's will; neither did I know its contents until now."

"Humph!" sneered Sidney. "He was my uncle, and I did all I could to make him comfortable during his last hours," added Boyles.

"Yes, and you put him in the ground before his body was fairly cold."

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean all that I say. People wondered that you should order the funeral the very next day after his death. I suppose you were in a hurry to get hold of his money."

"No more of this; you need not insult me."

"I suppose not, now that you have got the fortune," sneered Sidney.

"Well I have got it," replied Boyles.

"If you don't like it, you can't help it, you know."

The taunting tone of this remark aggravated the disappointed man more deeply, and he uttered some violent threats, which, in turn, roused the ire of Boyles. Hot words ensued, and there was a moment when physical force seemed to be the only resort for the settlement of the dispute.

While they were thus angrily reproaching each other the door opened, but no one entered. Boyles laughed at his cousin, and as much as admitted that he did not care a straw for his uncle, and taunted his rival on being beaten in the "squabble" for the fortune.

"We shall see," said Sidney. "If there is any law in the land the will shall be broken and the fortune divided between us."

"Break it if you can."

"You as good as say you did not care for Uncle Sidney—that you coaxed him till he made the will in your favor."

"Grant that I did; you would not be a competent witness in the case," sneered Boyles. "Go home and get reconciled. The money is mine, and I shall hold on to it."

"Not yet," said a deep hollow voice at the door which had opened before.

The disputants started. The derisive curl which had played upon the lips of Boyles disappeared, and his cheeks blanched. Sidney looked cooler, but was evidently much disturbed. The voice sounded strangely natural, and they both gazed nervously toward the door.

A form tottered into the room, in the presence of which both of the cousins retreated to the farthest corner of the room while their lips were livid and their cheeks ghastly pale with terror.

"This is the way you treat the dead," said the form, which the terror-stricken nephews had no difficulty in recognizing as that of General Sidney.

It was either him or his shadow, and he certainly looked more like a ghost than a living man. Boyles was paralyzed with fright, as one of stronger nerves might have been in the presence of such a sight. John Sidney, perhaps because he had more to hope for in the reappearance of his uncle, had the courage to advance a few paces toward the apparition.

"Begone, both of you!" said General Sidney, as he staggered to a chair, and sank heavily upon it.

I had witnessed the scene from the entry and now hastened to his assistance.

"For God's sake, Mr. Mortal, what does this mean," exclaimed John Sidney, his teeth chattering in the extremity of his fear.

"Drive them out of the house!" gasped the General.

I told them they had better go, informing them at the same time that their uncle was not and had not been dead. After they had in some measure recovered from their terror, they left, the one with his cup brimming full of bright anticipations dashed down, and the other satisfied at least with the confusion of his rival. I have no means of knowing what passed between them, when they got into the street, but I venture to assert that John Sidney did not lose the opportunity to retort severely upon his companion.

I called the housekeeper and servants to render assistance in getting the restored General to his chamber; but it was some time before I could convince them that it was not a ghost which had come to the house. We got him into bed again and the doctor soon joined us.

Now, curious reader, I must go back and relate what Emmie would not permit me to tell in the proper place.

When the corpse of General Sidney was put in the coffin, I discovered that it was not entirely cold. I privately called in the physician to examine it; but as there was neither breath, pulsation nor feeling, he pronounced him dead. He observed at the same time, that it was possible it was a case of asphyxia, or trance. The heat on the other hand, might be artificial or pro-

duced by the incipient stage of decomposition.

"But, Mr. Mortal," he continued, "you must keep watch of this corpse. Do not close the tomb door. Visit every hour until decomposition has actually begun."

"We ought not to bury this body," I remarked, placing my hand under the arm pits, where the heat could be very distinctly felt.

"Better not say anything; it would create an excitement."

And so the consultation ended. The funeral took place and the corpse was placed in the tomb. That night Spade and I watched it. The lid of the coffin had been removed and I had provided myself with articles necessary in case there should be any further signs of life. I cannot tell how it was, but somehow it was impressed upon me that General Sidney was not dead. Perhaps it was because I had recently been reading of a similar case in England where suspended animation had been restored after the lapse of a week.

There was nothing to indicate a resuscitation during the night, and in the morning I went home to breakfast leaving Spade in charge of the tomb. I had scarcely tasted my first cup of coffee when Spade rushed breathlessly into the house, assuring me that "the General," as he expressed it, "was opening one of his eyes." I did not stop to ask why he did not open the other, but seizing some clothing I had prepared for the occasion, I bade Spade go for the doctor, and ran with all my might for the tomb.

Both eyes were open. I poured some wine into his mouth, and commenced rubbing him with energy. When the doctor and Spade came, he had moved his hands and begun to breathe with difficulty. By the doctor's advice he was borne, coffin and all, to my house, and in the course of the forenoon he was able to sit up. We worked over him incessantly till noon, when he insisted upon being conveyed to his own house, which we reached just as the "will party" left; I held the General up while he listened to the conversation of his amiable nephews. The rest the reader knows.

General Sidney lived only a fortnight after his wonderful resuscitation; but long enough to make a new will, in which both of his nephews were disinherited, and his fortune given to various benevolent associations.

The Western Flood.

YANKTON, Dakota, letter gives us these details of the late disastrous freshet there:

In contemplating the ferocious tracks left by the flood it seems miraculous that hundreds of helpless people did not perish. For so great a disaster, in the material sense, the mortality has been comparatively trifling. It is estimated that the whole number of drowned persons will not exceed a dozen, or at the very utmost a score. The number of "narrow escapes" recounted is astonishing. It would appear that the people in general took matters very coolly. There was no panic, and presence of mind, aided by individual heroism, accomplished the work of rescue. Had the settlers stampeded in wild terror when the flood first broke around their homes, many more would have perished. As it was, some were cut out through the tops of houses, others betook themselves to trees, where they roosted through one terrible night of March, and a few were hardy enough to dare cross the treacherous ice-gorge and gain safety on the higher banks of the river. Most of the detailed information relative to the great freshet has long ago reached the Times by telegraph, but from Mandan and McCook, a distance of several hundred miles by river, at least 8,500 people have suffered more or less from the effect of the freshet. Of these, half have managed to save something for a new start, while the remaining half have been, in most cases, left without houses, bedding, food, clothing, teams, plows and even soil. Their wheat has been utterly ruined. They have no seed.

I called upon Secretary Hand, acting governor of the territory, to day, and asked his opinion in regard to the situation. He said:

"It is bad, very bad, indeed, but we are consoled by the providentially small loss of life, when hundreds, if not thousands, might have perished. Fully fifteen hundred people will have to be supported all this summer, I fear, because they have saved nothing but their lives. The season is growing late, and they cannot raise a crop unless they have immediate relief in the way of money."

"What will they most need to make a new beginning with?" I asked.

"Well, material to put up some kind of a house to shelter them, the government has sent some tents already—an ox-team and plow, a milk cow, and a few other things indispensable to a family on a farm. I think the sooner

they are made self-sustaining in that way the better. Nothing so demoralizes people naturally industrious as to be rendered dependent entirely on public bounty for any length of time. If they can have teams and plows at once, they can still raise a corn crop and some vegetables."

I went down to the temporary supply depot on the main street and found there Tom Cosby, of the quartermaster's department, up to his eyes in business, distributing military clothing to the sufferers. The pantaloons were all infantry "No. 1's"—the smallest size—and on six-footers, of whom there were many, presented the bare and desolate appearance of George Washington's knee-breeches, minus the stockings, on exhibition at the National capital. One German, with an aldermanic corporation, cried out: "Dot bants no vit one of mien legs!"

Cosby, however, was equal to the situation. "Here," said he to the corpulent Teuton. "Take two pairs, and put one on each leg."

This satisfied the applicant, and he retired rejoicing.

Many of the poor people were nearly naked some had not even a change of underclothing, and all felt rather dirty and miserable.

The ladies' relief committee received by the steamers Niobrara and Beck, from Sioux City and Omaha, several bales of female apparel, which they soon found ample use for. If possible, the women and children more nearly approached a state of nudity than the men.

The relief committee, including Secretary Hand, Governor Edmunds and Mr. Hudson, who was the first to relieve the unfortunate town of Vermillion, are unanimous in praise of Quartermaster Wheeler, who acted with the prompt benevolence which becomes a brave soldier and a true gentleman. He has been relieved of duty at this point, much to the regret of the entire community, whose respect and confidence he has worthily won.

Although the more prominent flood-marks are disappearing under the sun of early summer, enough remains to show the stranger the terrible nature of the late visitation. Piled on the levee, near the railroad tracks, are cakes of ice of gigantic thickness, some of them hundreds of tons, and strongly resembling in color and formation the "pedrigo," or cooled and broken lava, that disfigures the neighborhood of the Mexican volcanoes. One can easily conjecture how the river, having, to use the expression of Secretary Hand, "broken up wrong end first in Montana," found it impossible to burst this formidable obstacle when it extended clean across the bar and compelled the water to obliterate Green Island and other low-land settlements.

In the vicinity of this icy pedrigo may be seen a sight without parallel, I believe, in river history. Close together, lifted high and dry by ice and water and set down at several rods distance from the river, are the steamboats Black Hills, Nellie Peck and Butte, all of them badly scarred and shaken, and now undergoing repairs in this extraordinary species of dry-dock. It will take considerable time and trouble to replace them in the channel. This will be done ultimately on the house-moving principle so familiar with Chicagoans. Near by lie the rent and ruined remnants of the unfortunate boat Western—torn limb from limb, as it were, by the fury of the storm and flood. Her decks have been carried away. Her boilers and smoke-stacks strew the beach for an incredible distance, and what is left of her hull is buried in sand that also covers the railroad tracks to a depth of many feet.

Vermillion has had the Pompeii of the flood. The business part of that thriving town of nearly 1,200 people has floated down to the Gulf of Mexico. Merchants are beggared, farmers are ruined, and the prospect is really appalling. Still the people are cheerful, and are camping on the bluffs above their desolated valley. To add to their misfortune the cutaway, caused by the gorge, has removed the site of the settlement three miles inland, and it is not likely that the channel will ever be re-established on the old line.

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